

TODAY'S LECTURE

2/6/09

Finish Informal Fallacies

- **Fallacies Involving Unwarranted Assumptions**

The left side of the slide features a series of vertical stripes in various shades of gray and blue. Overlaid on these stripes are several circles of different sizes in a teal color. The largest circle is positioned in the middle-left area, with several smaller circles scattered below and to its right.

14. APPEAL TO UNRELIABLE AUTHORITY

UNRELIABLE AUTHORITY

- Appealing to an authority when the reliability of the authority may reasonably be doubted. (The arguer assumes, without sufficient warrant, that the authority in question is reliable.)



FIRST, SOME *RELIABLE* AUTHORITIES

Mary, who has normal color vision, told me that her new painting is blue. So Mary's new painting is blue.

The UCSB philosophy dept. website says that the main office is located in South Hall. Thus the main office is in South Hall.

My visual system presents to me a classroom full of people sitting down. So I have good reason to believe that there is a classroom full of people sitting down in front of me.

Hawking says that some galaxies are cannibals. Thus some galaxies consume other galaxies.



EXAMPLES OF UNRELIABLE AUTHORITIES

User Trollsauce65 on Youtube has commented that Justin Timberlake hates pancakes. So, JT hates pancakes.

Christen's old housemate promised that he will pay the money he owes within a week. So he will pay the money within a week.

Moonbeam has eaten a lot of LSD in her time. Now she declares that our universe is just one among an infinite number of parallel

The internet is not a dump truck. It's a series of tubes.
- Ted Stevens

Dr. Zoidberg (a medical doctor) claims that abstract entities like numbers do not exist. So such things do not exist.



A decorative vertical bar on the left side of the slide, featuring a series of vertical lines in shades of blue and grey, and several overlapping blue circles of different sizes.

15. FALSE CAUSE FALLACY

Four Kinds of False Cause Fallacies:

- Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc (“After this, therefore because of this”)
- Inferring Causation from Correlation
- Gambler’s Fallacy
- Slippery Slope

POST HOC ERGO PROPTER HOC

- An arguer commits this fallacy by illegitimately assuming that because event X preceded event Y, X caused Y.
- Examples:
 - Bono: Every time I clap a baby dies.
Audience member: Well then stop clapping!
 - We consulted our crystal ball before the road trip and thereafter we had a safe trip. Never underestimate the power of crystal to secure safe road trips.



INFERRING CAUSATION FROM CORRELATION

- An arguer commits this type of false cause fallacy by illegitimately assuming that because X events are correlated with Y events, the Xs cause the Ys.
- Examples:
 - Since sex education has become common, we've had a marked increase in promiscuity. So, sex education causes promiscuity.
 - The best athletes earn big salaries. So to make Smith a great athlete, pay him a big salary.
 - Apparently there's a direct correlation in New England between increases in liquor sales and increases in the salaries of ministers.



THE GAMBLER'S FALLACY

- The last 10 flips this (normal) coin came up tails. My bet is that it will come up heads on the next flip.
- It doesn't follow! Each coin toss is independent of the preceding toss.
- There is no gambling "karma".



SLIPPERY SLOPE FALLACY

We often argue that something shouldn't happen because it will have bad consequences. Often this is OK:

If you take heroin regularly you'll become addicted, which will completely mess up your life. That would suck.

Slippery slope arguments have a similar structure:

(1) If one thing A happens, this will set off a chain of events B, C, D, E....

(2) Some of these things – say, D and E would suck.

So, (3) We shouldn't let A happen.

As it stands this needn't be a fallacy. *The problem comes when it's unlikely that all of these consequences will occur.*

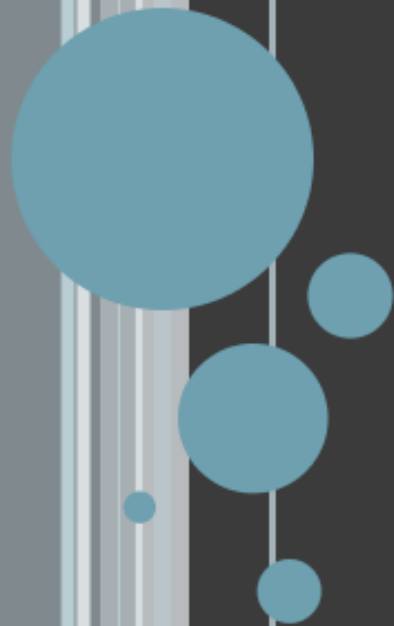


SLIPPERY SLOPE EXAMPLE

- 67. I told a joke at the party. It flopped. So, everyone there thought I was a loser. So, I'll never be invited again. If word gets out, I won't be invited anywhere. And I'm sure they're all talking about my stupid joke. So, I've completely ruined my chances for a decent social life. There's nothing left for me now but years of loneliness and misery. How I wish I'd never told that joke!



16. COMPLEX QUESTION



COMPLEX QUESTION

- A complex question illegitimately presupposes some conclusion alluded to in the premises.

(*) Have you stopped beating your wife?

This question presupposes that you have beaten your wife in the past, so (presuming that you haven't) there's no way to honestly answer it.

** Note that almost any question will have some presuppositions. For example, 'when was the last time Radiohead played in SB?' presupposes that they have played in SB before. The fallacy is committed only when the presupposition is unwarranted.



COMPLEX QUESTION

Some examples:

- Do you think that nematode minds should be identified with their souls or with their cells?
- Who is the king of France?
- When you saw the defendant pick the lock, how would you describe his behavior? Sneaky?

(supposing you didn't see the defendant)



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Fallacies of Irrelevance

- **Argument against the Person (Ad hominem)**
- **Straw man**
- **Appeal to Force**
- **Appeal to the People**
- **Appeal to Pity**
- **Appeal to Ignorance**

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Fallacies of Ambiguity

LIST OF FALLACIES

- **Equivocation**
- **Amphiboly**
- **Composition**
- **Division**

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Fallacies involving Unwarranted Assumptions

- **Begging the Question**
- **False Dilemma**
- **Appeal to Unreliable Authority**
- **False Cause**

